United Nations S/PV.6985

Security Council

Sixty-eighth year

Provisional

6985th meeting
Tuesday, 25 June 2013, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Sir Mark Lyall Grant	(United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland)
Members:	Argentina	Mrs. Perceval
	Australia	Mr. Quinlan
	Azerbaijan	Mr. Mehdiyev
	China	Mr. Wang Min
	France	Mr. Araud
	Guatemala	Mr. Rosenthal
	Luxembourg	Ms. Lucas
	Morocco	Mr. Bouchaara
	Pakistan	Mr. Masood Khan
	Republic of Korea	Mr. Kim Sook
	Russian Federation	Mr. Iliichev
	Rwanda	Mr. Gasana
	Togo	Mr. Kadangha-Bariki
	United States of America	Mrs. DiCarlo

Agenda

The situation in Mali

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Mali (S/2013/338)

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13-37256 (E)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Mali

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Mali (S/2013/338)

The President: Under rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Mali to participate in this meeting.

On behalf of the Council, I welcome the presence at the Council table of His Excellency Mr. Tiéman Hubert Coulibaly, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the Republic of Mali.

Under rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Albert Koenders, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Mali and Head of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali; Mr. Hervé Ladsous, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations; and Ms. Amira Haq, Under-Secretary-General for Field Support, to participate in this meeting.

On behalf of the Council, I welcome Mr. Koenders, who is joining today's meeting via video-teleconference from Bamako.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2013/338, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Mali.

I now give the floor to Mr. Koenders.

Mr. Koenders (*spoke in French*): It is an honour and a pleasure for me to address the Security Council from Bamako in my new capacity as Special Representative of the Secretary General for Mali. The report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Mali, which is before the Council in document S/2013/338, follows up on resolution 2100 (2013) of 25 April, establishing the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA).

I wish to offer an overview of the situation on the ground in my briefing, focusing on four main themes: the security situation; the mediation process and national reconciliation, including the recently concluded preliminary agreement; preparations for the elections; and the humanitarian and human rights situations. Mr. Ladsous will focus more specifically on strategic and operational issues related to the transition, and Ms. Haq on the complex issue of support to the Mission.

The security situation has gradually improved as a result of the military operations launched in January by the Malian army and France against extremist groups in northern Mali. Most large cities in the north have been taken. Since these large-scale operations, the forces of Operation Serval and the African-led International Support Mission in Mali (AFISMA) have undertaken tactical operations. There have been no major clashes. Since these operations, some extremist elements have joined the population and others have left the country. The major fighting has stopped and the security situation in Timbuktu and Gao is gradually returning to normal, thanks to the presence of AFISMA and Operation Serval alongside the Malian forces. The incidents recorded in these areas recently should be seen as isolated acts of banditry. Furthermore, the extremist groups seem to be avoiding direct confrontation with the Malian army and its allies. However, scattered operations continue, leading to the discovery of several weapons caches.

Despite this improvement in the security situation, the situation remains complex and fragile. We have reported clashes between the Mouvement national pour la libération de l'Azawad (MNLA) and various armed groups in the north — essentially the Mouvement arabe de l'Azawad, the Mouvement pour l'unicit et le jihad en Afrique de l'Ouest and other armed Tuareg and Arab elements. Several reasons have been behind the clashes, including fighting for control of some routes used for drug trafficking and other goods, as well as acts of revenge for the atrocities committed against civilians during the occupation. In addition, another armed Tuareg movement — the Haut Conseil de l'Azawad — has been established as a coalition of the Mouvement islamique de l'Azawad and elements of the MNLA.

As for the region of Kidal, the MNLA has maintained control of the city of Kidal and its surroundings and strengthened its presence in some localities. Meanwhile, the Malian army has reinforced its presence in Gao. On 4 June, the Malian army launched an attack on the MNLA, taking the town of Anefis, which it holds to this day.

As the threat of asymmetric actions and violent clashes remains signficant, the protection of civilians and the security of United Nations personnel are among my main concerns as we lay the groundwork for MINUSMA in Bamako and the regions of the north. In this fragile security situation, regional and international partners, including the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the European Union and the United Nations have stepped up their efforts to convince the Government of Mali and the MNLA to resume dialogue under the auspices of the ECOWAS mediator and his team in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso.

(*spoke in English*)

In that context, I am happy to report that on 18 June the transitional Government of Mali and armed groups in the northern regions, particularly the MNLA and the Haut Conseil de l'Azawad signed a preliminary agreement on the presidential elections and inclusive negotiations. The Mouvement arabe de l'Azawad and the popular front officially adhered to the preliminary agreement on the same day. I signed as a witness on behalf of the United Nations.

The preliminary agreement is, in my view, an important first step towards the full restoration of constitutional order and territorial integrity. It paves the way for the holding of elections nationwide, including in Kidal, and subsequent dialogue with elected officials on governance, justice, security sector reform and reconciliation issues. From 1 July onwards, if the Council so agrees, the MINUSMA Force Commander will chair the established Joint Technical Security Commission, which has started overseeing the implementation of the ceasefire in Kidal. This includes the process of cantonment as a first step in the process of disarmament and demobilization, the return to Kidal of the Malian armed forces with Serval and AFISMA, and the return of the administration.

For my part, I will chair on behalf of the United Nations the international commission that will monitor and oversee the implementation of the agreement. An international commission of inquiry will also have to be established to investigate war crimes, crimes against humanity, crimes of genocide, crimes of sexual violence, drug trafficking and other serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law throughout the territory of Mali.

Although a first and preliminary step, the agreement is critical, not only because of the forthcoming elections, but also because it commits the parties to a post-electoral dialogue. If it is to be successful, the dialogue will need to be comprehensive and inclusive, and tackle the root causes of the recurrent crises in Mali.

Some limited progress was also registered on the broader political front. The long-awaited National Commission for Dialogue and Reconciliation was established on 25 April and its 33 members, including its President and two Vice -Presidents, were appointed. The Commission came under some criticism for the perceived lack of transparency and inclusiveness in the selection of its members. Its mandate and scope were also deemed by many as too broad. However, people generally welcomed its establishment and look forward to the start of its activities if it addresses long-standing issues of truth and impunity. The Commission nonetheless faces technical and logistical challenges. The international community on the ground is determined to provide the necessary support and resources, and has established for this purpose a coordination mechanism at the request of the Commission and led by MINUSMA.

Meanwhile, importantly for the Council, preparations are under way for the elections, starting with the presidential polls on 28 July. At the request of the Government, MINUSMA is supporting the deployment of sensitive and non-sensitive electoral materials to the northern regions as we speak. These include the national identification card — known as NINA cards — which will be the sole cards allowing individuals to vote. Meanwhile, coordination mechanisms have been established to enhance joint United Nations support to the elections as the Mission continues to deploy.

Major challenges remain, including the need to maintain the broad political consensus on technical aspects of the elections, the timely delivery of electoral materials, and issues of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees. One of the challenges is to ensure that IDPs can retrieve their NINA cards so they can vote in their current places of residence. Concerning the participation of refugees, on 14 June a Government delegation visited Burkina Faso, Mauritania and Niger to conduct a census of refugees with a view to identifying potential voters and discuss modalities for setting up polling stations in the respective countries. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees,

the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the International Organization for Migration are working closely with the Government in this regard. Concerning the provision of security throughout the electoral period, the Government has requested the support of MINUSMA, particularly for the northern regions. We are currently assessing the needs in the context of our capabilities.

Humanitarian needs in Mali remain of concern to me. About 3.5 million people are considered food insecure, with 1.4 million of them in need of immediate food assistance and at least one in five households in the three northern regions facing a severe food shortage. Some 660,000 children under the age of five remain at risk of acute malnutrition. Mali, north and south combined, has the third highest child mortality rate worldwide, with 176 deaths per 1,000 live births.

Humanitarian activities in the northern regions are being carried out where possible in spite of the security challenges and the coming rainy season, which will to a certain extent limit the delivery of assistance. Although most of the administration has returned to the Gao and Timbuktu regions, the delivery of services remains a very serious challenge. Some schools have reopened in those regions, but in Kidal the administration has yet to deploy and no schools are functioning. It is estimated that more than 100,000 children still have no access to education in the north. Access to health care also remains limited. As of 18 June, the consolidated appeal process for Mali for 2013 was 32-per cent funded, having raised $133 million. In my view, additional resources are urgently needed to address the basic needs of millions of Malians and pave the way for early recovery, which will be critical to gaining and retaining the trust and support of the people.

The human rights situation remains precarious. I have sent human rights teams to Gao, Gossi, Timbuktu and Kidal. They have registered violations committed by all parties. These include disappearances, extrajudicial executions, ill-treatment, looting of private property, illegal arrests and arbitrary detention, as well as impunity, which is exacerbated by ethnic tensions between different communities. In addition, there is a severe shortage in the delivery of basic services such as clean water, health care and education, which are our top priorities. Following the organization of the national colloquium on transitional justice, discussions are taking place as we speak in Bamako on transitional justice processes, entailing truth-seeking, investigations, the prosecution of perpetrators and reparations, with the support of UNDP and MINUSMA.

Meanwhile, the Mission continues to mainstream gender issues throughout its activities. In cooperation with UN-Women and the Ministry of Women's Affairs, it is supporting the national strategy for women's participation in the elections, as well as advocacy towards the allocation of a women's quota in the electoral process. Also, the Mission is setting up mechanisms to address and prevent conflict-related sexual violence. In turn, these mechanisms will pave the way to support for the Government in the establishment of institutional structures to address sexual and gender-based violence in the framework of security sector reform.

With regard to support for cultural preservation, UNESCO and the Government of Mali have recently jointly assessed the damage to Timbuktu's cultural heritage, including the situation of ancient manuscripts. A total of 14 of Timbuktu's mausoleums, including those that are part of the UNESCO World Heritage sites, have been totally destroyed, along with two others at the Djingareyber Mosque. The emblematic El Farouk monument at the entrance to the city was also razed. An estimated 4,203 manuscripts from the Ahmed Baba research centre were lost, while another 300,000 that had been pre-emptively removed — mainly to Bamako — and are in urgent need of conservation. On the basis of this early assessment, MINUSMA and UNESCO will join hands, as requested by the Security Council, in efforts to support the safeguarding of Malian cultural and historical heritage, which has been seriously affected by the armed conflict in northern Mali.

The situation in Mali has, as Council members know, broad regional and international repercussions. The recent attacks in Niger are a stark reminder of the magnitude of the problems facing the Sahel region. As international attention is focused on Mali, terrorist and other criminal groups will continue to shift their operations to neighbouring countries as a result of the porous and extremely weak border management control systems in place. Effectively addressing the challenges facing the Sahel region will require time and very concerted efforts. The upcoming meeting of the Support and Follow-up Group on Mali on 1 July in Bamako and the presentation of the United Nations integrated strategy to the Council tomorrow will provide good opportunities to further highlight

the transnational nature of threats and the need for a coherent and coordinated approach in tackling them.

As we focus on the wider region, we also need to acknowledge that long-term support will be required. In Mali, the root causes of the crises will need to be addressed, as noted above, including bad governance, corruption, cleavages within and between regions and groups, a sense of political exclusion on the part of a new generation, poverty and the lack of security sector reform. Any solution can only be Malian in nature, and accompanied by the international community. For that to happen, broad based dialogue is needed, thoroughly analysing the complex causes of the crisis that has shocked so many Malians, in order to prevent it from happening again.

The international community is showing great solidarity, and I urge all Malians to seize this opportunity to steer their country in the right direction. In this regard, I welcome the preliminary agreement and call on the parties to support its full implementation in the spirit of national cohesion and long-lasting peace. Further, I invite the political class to reach a firm consensus on the electoral process, in spite of anticipated risks, and encourage all Malians to ensure an inclusive non-violent electoral and post-electoral period. Supporting the transitional authorities in providing an environment conducive to the holding of peaceful and transparent elections and the implementation of the preliminary agreement will be a key focus of my efforts in the weeks to come.

The robust mandate the Council has given us includes the stabilization of key population centres and the protection of civilians. It underlines the need to emphasize a political solution to the fundamental problems of the country, including human rights, the restoration of State authority and the rule of law sectors. It underlines, if agreed, the need to deploy a peacekeeping operation in a context of asymmetric threats that will be taken very seriously.

At present, naturally, our resources are still limited. We are immediately called to assist in two key areas — the implementation of the preliminary accord and the upcoming elections — that constitute preliminary steps towards the next important phase. The success of these activities will depend on key confidence-building and assistance to put Mali on the path of stability. I take this opportunity to call on Member States to fully support us and contribute critical and immediate resources, military and police personnel, and key enablers.

In closing, allow me to thank the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States and other international partners for their commitment to addressing the Malian crisis. I particularly would like to extend my gratitude to the African Union Special Representative for Mali and Head of AFISMA, former President Pierre Buyoya, for his personal role and involvement in ongoing stabilization efforts. Also, I would like to commend AFISMA troops for their courage and dedication to the cause of peace and stability in Mali and reiterate my condolences to the bereaved families of their fallen brothers in arms.

The President: I thank Mr. Koenders for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Hervé Ladsous.

Mr. Ladsous (*spoke in French*): I thank you, Mr. President, for this opportunity to address the Security Council at this undoubtedly decisive juncture in our collective involvement in Mali. Indeed, if the Council decides today that the security situation prevailing in the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) areas of responsibility allow for a transfer of authority from the African-led International Support Mission in Mali (AFISMA) to MINUSMA on 1 July, MINUSMA will eventually become the third largest United Nations peacekeeping operation. MINUSMA will operate under robust rules of engagement. Its military and police forces will absorb the majority of the AFISMA forces. There will be a grace period of four months to allow military and police units to strengthen their contributions and incorporate the capabilities requested by the United Nations in terms of staffing, training and equipment. The support of international partners will be very important in that regard. I would note that the United Nations continues to receive additional commitments from potential contributors, enabling us to reach the maximal authorized personnel levels and thus respond to the Mission's needs. But we still face critical gaps, especially with regard to enablers and force multipliers.

MINUSMA will therefore play a key role in the stabilization of Mali and the protection of its citizens threatened by insecurity in the north of the country. Political engagement with Malian actors in order to promote dialogue and reconciliation between and

among communities remains the cornerstone of our involvement, as was the case last week during the recent negotiations in Ouagadougou. MINUSMA will also be very active in promoting human rights and support for the restoration of the authority of the State, including in the areas of justice and strengthening the rule of law. MINUSMA troops and police officers will help create a safe environment that is conducive to stabilization by deploying from major cities in northern Mali. They will conduct patrols, both alone and together with the Malian defence and security forces. MINUSMA troops will be mobile and will conduct operations across a wide area on the basis of integrated analysis and information-sharing with partners. A limited presence will be maintained in Bamako, and all MINUSMA operations will take into account the need to minimize the risk to civilians.

In preparation for the transition, AFISMA has continued to gradually assume operational responsibility for several areas in northern Mali, as Operation Serval has begun to draw down. As of today, 25 June, the strength of AFISMA stands at 6,148 troops, with personnel deployed in the towns and regions of Timbuktu, Gao, Ménaka, Tessalit, Aguelhok, Douentza, Diabaly and now Kidal.

Since its establishment on 25 April, MINUSMA has begun to implement its mandate in terms of political good offices, electoral support, human rights and, in close cooperation with United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, support for the restoration of State authority. The MINUSMA military component will be built up in the coming months. On 1 July, MINUSMA will have an initial operational capability, including in the force headquarters. The Force Commander arrived in Mali today and the Deputy Force Commander deployed last week. The two sector headquarters in Gao and Timbuktu will also be operational soon, with staff for all headquarters to be further and quickly built up over the next two months. The two Sector Commanders have been recruited and will deploy shortly. By the end of July, we expect 100 staff officers to be on the ground and all headquarters to be fully staffed by the end of August. I can therefore state that we anticipate reaching full operational capability by 31 December.

I would note that some have raised concerns about the transition of the AFISMA Chadian troops as Blue Helmets, given Chad's listing by the Secretary-General among the countries that have allowed child recruitment in their armed forces. Clearly, the Government of Chad will need to comply with and implement the five short-term measures of its action plan to end the recruitment of child soldiers within the four-month grace period I just mentioned, as agreed with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. Let me assure the Council that the United Nations is making every effort to screen the Chadian contingent that is to be re-hatted and ensure that no troops under 18 are among them, as well as enhance our efforts on training on child protection issues.

With respect to the police, we intend to re-hat the three formed police units currently deployed with AFISMA in Bamako, Gao and Timbuktu on 1 July, if the Council so decides. Assessments of those units are currently being conducted. Twenty additional individual police officers from AFISMA will also be re-hatted, while 10 new police officers are expected on the ground by 1 July. Two additional formed police units and 50 individual police officers are expected to be deployed in August.

Training will play a key role in managing the transition in Mali from AFISMA to MINUSMA. We are deploying a mobile team to Mali today to conduct initial training for AFISMA personnel to undergo the transition to MINUSMA. Its immediate focus will be on the officer ranks, so as to ensure that the most important messages regarding the mandate, as well as the posture, attitude and conduct of the United Nations force, reach the troops deployed throughout the country.

The majority of our civilian, police and military staff will be in the north. We are currently looking at establishing civilian field offices in Timbuktu and Gao and, very quickly, a small presence in Kidal to support the implementation of the preliminary agreement. We will also maintain a military presence in the key population centres, defined for the purposes of the mandate as Douentza and Diabaly; the key cities of Timbuktu, Gao and Kidal; and the towns of Ménaka and Tessalit. Our emphasis will be on a mobile force able to project influence across the wide geographical areas in the north.

I would reiterate that we continue to seek pledges for important outstanding capabilities, including medium-utility helicopters, armed helicopters, intelligence, information operations and special forces. We are counting more than ever before on the continued support of both our traditional and our new troop-contributing countries to help us fill those critical shortfalls.

I think that the activities that we are conducting in Mali are an excellent example of the unique nature of United Nations peacekeeping as a political-military endeavour. Under the leadership of Special Representative Albert Koenders, whose role in the Mission I commend, the Mission has played a key role alongside the Economic Community of West African States and the African Union in the political negotiations leading to the preliminary agreement on Kidal. MINUSMA will now have critical and immediate responsibilities to support the implementation of the preliminary agreement — signed, as the Council is aware, on 18 June — particularly with regard to the ceasefire provisions.

As outlined by Mr. Koenders, those include chairing the commission that will monitor the ceasefire, accompanying the return of the Malian army and administration to Kidal, and overseeing the cantonment of armed groups. The posture and capacities of future MINUSMA forces will be critical to the success of that process. The rapid deployment of AFISMA troops to Kidal town will be also be key to ensuring that the process is off to a good start, and I am pleased to report that an AFISMA contingent was deployed to Kidal over the weekend for that purpose.

Just over four weeks remain until the first round of the presidential elections. As experience in other countries has taught us, a poorly managed electoral process could further aggravate instability. To that end, MINUSMA will continue to actively support all efforts to develop consensus among stakeholders on the rules of the game and a shared commitment to accepting the outcome of the elections.

Throughout the process, MINUSMA will provide security, technical and logistical support, to the extent possible, given the early stages of its deployment. We are closely looking at ways to strengthen the Mission's capabilities in those areas. To that end, for example, we are bringing additional resources from neighbouring countries under existing arrangements for inter-mission cooperation. My colleague Ms. Haq will elaborate further on the critical role of inter-mission cooperation in the success of our efforts in Mali. We will need agreement from contributing countries to realize the full potential of that important tool.

As we embark on this ambitious new chapter in the history of peacekeeping, it is worth taking a moment to contemplate the magnitude of the challenge before us. Past instances of failure, or partial failure, we know have had lasting implications for United Nations peacekeeping doctrine and practice and, most importantly, for civilians and peacekeepers on the ground. With that in mind, we must be aware that we are facing new and unique challenges.

First, the United Nations is deploying a peacekeeping operation in a geopolitical context characterized by asymmetrical threats not previously encountered in a United Nations peacekeeping environment. MINUSMA has a mandate to use all necessary means to ensure the implementation of many elements of its mandate, including taking active steps to deter and prevent the return of armed elements to key population centres. While that does not describe a peace-enforcement or counter-terrorism role, which will be undertaken by others who have capacities beyond the scope of and means of the United Nations mandate and capabilities, it will require the United Nations to be as robust as possible in implementing that mandate in an environment characterized by threats.

However, with respect to circumstances where the Mission might be under imminent and serious threat, we are finalizing a technical arrangement with France that will define the modalities to be used by the United Nations and by France for the provision of support by the latter to MINUSMA.

Secondly, in spite of the progress that I outlined earlier, three significant challenges remain for the transition, under the best conditions possible, from AFISMA to MINUSMA. Our central priority will be to maintain seamless continuity between the two operations so as to preserve the security gains made so far and avoid creating any security vacuums while supporting elections and the ceasefire agreement. An initial transition period of six months will see the buildup of all of our additional military capacities and the concomitant extension of the Mission's operations.

Thirdly, the realities on the ground, the harsh climate, the very limited infrastructure and the vast size of the geographic area of responsibility that we will have will create unique challenges for the sustainment and support of the Mission. The generation of logistical enablers will be an absolute initial priority to enable the establishment and sustainment of the Mission in northern Mali. My colleague Ms. Haq will elaborate on those efforts in greater detail.

However, we must be realistic and accept that not all of those capabilities and means will be immediately available. The deployment of mission components must also take account of such things as improved security conditions and the establishment of infrastructure. We will require patience, concerted support and significant investments to ensure that the gains made so far are protected, strengthen stability in Mali and make every effort to guard against the spread of insecurity to the surrounding region.

I would like to conclude by thanking all the members of the Council for their contributions and support as we prepare to launch the newest operation. Our ongoing joint efforts in Mali remind us that peacekeeping is truly a global partnership. We will build on the success of France's Operation Serval and, with the support of the Council and our partners in the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), who have deployed their forces under AFISMA, we will continue to engage Malian actors on a political resolution to the conflict. I would also like to take this opportunity to express our deep appreciation to the African Union and ECOWAS for all of their efforts. I also thank the brave women and men of AFISMA for the exemplary work they have done to support the restoration of stability in Mali since the beginning of 2013. Moreover, our development partners, including the World Bank, bilateral donors and the specialized agencies of the United Nations, will also continue to have a critical role to play to make the new peace in Mali sustainable.

As the United Nations assumes command of operations in Mali, we now call on our other partners to join this campaign for peace, justice and reconciliation. As I said earlier, that will be a challenge that requires efforts by all stakeholders — first and foremost the Malians themselves, but also the international community, and especially the countries of the Sahel region. Lastly, it will be a challenge for the entire Organization. I am confident that we will meet it through our united efforts.

The President: I thank Mr. Ladsous for his briefing.

I recognize that we are discussing the launch of an important new mission, but maybe this is the time to remind Secretariat briefers that they should limit their remarks to 15 minutes. We have made some good progress in recent months in restricting the size of the written reports from the Secretary-General, but we seem to be going in the opposite direction in terms of the oral briefings from the Secretariat to the Council.

I now give the floor to Ms. Haq.

Ms. Haq: Thank you, Mr. President, for the opportunity to brief the Council on mission-support efforts in Mali.

The immediate priority of the Department of Field Support is to establish the initial operational capability of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) as soon as possible. My colleague, Hervé Ladsous, has set the substantive compass according to which mission-support efforts in MINUSMA are guided. In my briefing to the Council today, I will explain how, despite formidable constraints, we are on track to meeting requirements and how we plan to satisfy the operational needs of MINUSMA as best we can from the transition on 1 July and onwards.

MINUSMA mission support is simultaneously engaged in two other complex endeavours, namely, preparations for the presidential elections, the first round of which will take place on 28 July, and follow-up to the interim agreement signed in Ouagadougou last week. That would be a formidable triple challenge in any context, but it is complicated by several features of the operating environment in Mali, and specifically in the northern part of the country.

Our efforts to set up the Mission currently focus on several priorities, including the provision of rations for troops, fuel for vehicles and premises for work and living. We are confident that our systems for the distribution of rations and water after 1 July will meet the needs of MINUSMA troops. We still face some critical information gaps with regard to fuel, but we anticipate that the MINUSMA fuel-distribution capacity will be operational by 1 July. With regard to the premises for the Mission, we are making arrangements to establish the various force and sector headquarters in Bamako and the north, starting with Gao and Timbuktu. A mission presence in Kidal will be established in due course.

In support of the elections, we have been involved in transporting election materials to Gao and Timbuktu. The agreement signed by the Government of Mali and representatives of the Mouvement national pour la libération de l'Azawad last week in Ouagadougou has significant implications for MINUSMA mission

support. In particular, MINUSMA is expected to support and supervise the cantonment of combatants in one of the most challenging environments in the country, namely, Kidal.

MINUSMA is rightly considered to be one of the most logistically challenging missions the United Nations has ever launched. That is so for several reasons.

First, the climatic conditions in northern Mali, where most of our operations will be located, are harsh, to put it mildly. Sixty-five per cent of Mali's landmass, which is twice the size of France, is desert or semi-desert. The temperature in Timbuktu, which will be the sector-west headquarters for MINUSMA, regularly reaches 48°C, or 120°F. Last week, our team visited Kidal when the afternoon temperature there reached 52°C, or 125°F. There is no functioning power grid in Gao. Our energy needs there, as in Timbuktu and Kidal, will therefore be met through mobile power generators. At such temperatures, even high-capacity generators will be put to the test. Indeed, all information and communication technology, vehicles, refrigeration and tentage ultimately to be used in Mali will be exposed to climatic conditions that accelerate their decay. We already know that certain technological options are out of the question. For example, we are unable to deploy our mobile communication system to Kidal because its sensitive components will melt.

Under those extreme conditions, it comes as little surprise that water availability is limited, particularly in the arid north, where our operations will be concentrated. An initial engineering assessment by the Mission has already confirmed that in Kidal the Mission will jeopardize local water supply by tapping into local reservoirs. Therefore, conscious of the explicit request in resolution 2100 (2013) to manage the Mission's environmental impact carefully, we are looking into other technologies that would allow us to produce water from air humidity.

True operational capability means that MINUSMA must be able to provide a broad range of essential aviation services: ground services such as cargo handling, fire fighting and fuel delivery and storage; the ability to carry out search and rescue missions; and airfield and helicopter landing-site construction and renovation. Given the long distances that must be traversed in Mali, each and every one of those services must be in place, intact and functioning. Those are also highly technical and capital-intensive endeavours that take time to establish from scratch.

The airfields in northern Mali are unable to service large aircraft. The airstrips allow for only small to medium aircraft, which carry limited passengers and cargo. For the time being, therefore, we will need to rely on military helicopters for an unusually large share of air transport requirements. We are eagerly awaiting confirmation from various Member States as to the provision of helicopters for the Mission. The central importance of medical support to United Nations personnel is recognized by all. We all agree that we must ensure casualty evacuation and medical evacuation capability. In northern Mali that translates directly into more helicopters.

Of course, under those circumstances, road transport becomes all the more important, but there are challenges in that regard as well. Last week, when trying to determine the most feasible way to transport some computers, a satellite dish and some generators to the north, we discovered that there was no way for the equipment to arrive safely by road.

The problem is twofold. First, the road infrastructure in the north is spotty, often consisting of little more than sand over long stretches. Secondly, with respect to the security situation, even with the agreement with the Mouvement national pour la libération de l'Azawad (MNLA) in Kidal, there are still armed groups that have sworn to oppose and attack the United Nations at every opportunity. We need only recall the concerns raised by the suicide-bomb-making workshop discovered by French forces two weeks ago just a few miles outside of Gao, or the several thousand pounds of fertilizer, uniforms and uniform-making equipment that was seized.

We have deployed some of our most experienced mission-support colleagues to lead the effort in Bamako — our "A-team". These are colleagues with experience in starting up and sustaining some of the most challenging missions of the past 30 years. If anyone can get this done, they can, and I am confident that they will.

Others are chipping in. Because of the shortage of aircraft, the United Nations Mission in Liberia has lent its B200 aircraft to meet its short-term needs. Because of the time it would normally take to procure critical items, the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti has made reserve equipment available for immediate

delivery. The United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) has made available air assets, equipment and a range of back-office support functions, including human resources, finance and procurement staff. For its part, the Global Service Centre has drawn from the strategic deployment stocks in Brindisi to provide vehicles, communications equipmeat and security material for airlifting to Bamako.

The Global Field Support Strategy (GFSS) articulates a vision wherein the United Nations provides faster, higher-quality support for a win-win situation that benefits troops, civilian staff and the United Nations system as a whole. In sum, due to exigency as well as the upholding of GFSS principles, inter-mission cooperation, shared services and a smaller footprint with less risk to staff all are central features of the MINUSMA start-up and will remain central features throughout the life of the Mission.

Together with Hervé Ladsous and Jeff Feltman, we have instructed all peacekeeping and special political missions to expedite the release of staff who are needed in Mali.

The Department of Field Support and other departments have played an important part in staffing, financing and establishing the Mission during this critical start-up phase, with a strong emphasis on flexibility, pragmatism and timely action. The contract to rent several major facilities, including the building that will serve as force headquarters in Bamako, was prepared with staff from the Department of Field Support, the Department of Management, ONUCI and MINUSMA, and was concluded and signed by all parties concerned within one week of the initial interface with the landlord in Mali. For the United Nations, that is lightning speed. While United Nations rules and regulations are being closely adhered to, the emphasis on flexibility is leading to positive results indeed.

In Mali, neither the challenges nor the risks at hand should be underestimated. Much is beyond our control. But our efforts to date and the results achieved by MINUSMA thus far suggest that with commitment, vision and the continued support of Member States, we just may be able to beat the odds. When we reduce the Mission's environmental footprint by introducing solar power or technologies for local water production, we also reduce the costs, and security risks, of an exposed and vulnerable supply chain. When the Global Service Centre deploys engineering expertise, vehicles and information-technology equipment from its holdings, a mission becomes operational more quickly than it would have otherwise. This is a new way of doing business. This is a better way of doing peacekeeping.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Mali.

Mr. Coulibaly (Mali) (*spoke in French*): Mr. President, allow me at the outset, on behalf of the delegation of Mali, to convey to you our warmest congratulations on the accession of your country, the United Kingdom, to the presidency of the Security Council in June. I wish also to welcome the convening of this meeting dealing with the consideration of the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Mali (S/2013/338).

Exactly two months ago, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 2100 (2013) establishing, under Chapter VII, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA). Since then, a number of new developments have occurred in the context of the implementation of the resolution.

Mali welcomes the report under consideration, which sets out the considerable progress that has been achieved in the security and political areas, particularly with regard to the effective implementation of the transition road map, the development of the dialogue and reconciliation process, the stepping up of preparations for the presidential and legislative elections, improvement in the human rights situation and the appointment of a Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Mali and of the MINUSMA Force Commander.

In terms of security, the end of large-scale fighting around the main urban areas in the north, the routing of the armed groups and the drastic drop in their capacity to be spoilers thanks to the joint efforts of the Malian, African and French armed forces, all are favourable indicators with respect to the transfer of competence from AFISMA to MINUSMA within the time limit set by resolution 2100 (2013). That is why my delegation fully endorses the appeal made by the Secretary-General calling on Member States to support the deployment of MINUSMA.

Politically, I am pleased to recall the fact that on 18 June last, the Government of Mali, faithful to

its commitments to the international community in the quest for a peaceful and lasting solution to the crisis in Mali, signed the preliminary agreement for the presidential elections and for inclusive peace talks in Mali, with the coordination of Malian armed movements.

Signed in Ouagadougou under the auspices of President Blaise Compaoré, President of Burkina Faso and mediator for the Mali crisis, the agreement represents a decisive step towards the re-establishment of the territorial integrity of Mali and creates conditions conducive to the holding of the presidential elections throughout the national territory.

In essence, the agreement provides for the immediate cessation of hostilities, the cantonment and disarmament of armed groups, and the deployment of administrative and basic services and the Malian defence and security forces in the Kidal region.

The Coordination des mouvements et forces patriotiques de résistance and the Mouvement arabe de l'Azawad have expressed their support for the agreement.

Along those same lines, the President of the Republic, Mr. Dioncounda Traoré, held a number of meetings with political leaders with a view to the improved implementation of the agreement and the holding of transparent and peaceful elections.

I cannot end this chapter of my statement without reiterating the urgent appeal of the Government of Mali to the Council to ensure the transfer of competencies from the African-led international support mission for Mali to the new United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA). That transfer must take place quickly so as to ensure that MINUSMA will be in Mali for as short a period as possible. The brevity of its mandate will serve as evidence of its success in Mali. For their leadership and invaluable contribution to resolving the crisis in Mali, we would like especially to thank His Excellency President Alassane Ouattara of Côte d'Ivoire, ECOWAS Chairman-in-Office; His Excellency Blaise Compaoré of Burkina Faso, mediator for the Mali crisis; and His Excellency President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan of Nigeria, the joint mediator. To the United Nations, the European Union, France, Chad and its army and to all our bilateral and multilateral partners, we express our sincere thanks and deep gratitude for the crucially essential role they continue to play for the definitive return of peace and stability in Mali.

The President: There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers. I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion of the subject.

The meeting rose at 11.05 a.m.